Export of medicinal herbs to China

1640. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that huge quantity of medicinal herb is being exported to China where from they are re-exported to the International market on higher prices;

(b) the attempts being made by India for exporting the medicinal herbs directly to the global market;

(c) whether any special scheme has been formulated by the Government for the supply of the medicinal herbs in view of its increasing demand in coming days; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. As per the statistics collated by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistic (DGCIS), Government of India, India's total export of medicinal plants and products in the year 2006-07 (April-March) amounted to US $ 200 million. The Indian export of medicinal plant to China during 2006-07 were only US$ 2.06 million which in no way can be called a major export for India.

(c) and (d) Government have introduced several facilities and schemes to provide policy and financial support for enhancement of R&D activities and development of farming, product diversification, export production and exports of Indian medicinal plants, herbs and herbal products. In fact, a special support scheme named Vishesh Krishi & Gramin Udyog Yojana has been introduced by Government to encourage the trade to step up export development activities and export of minor forest produce including medicinal plants and herbs. Under this scheme, exporters would be entitled to receive Duty Credit Script at the rate of 5% of FOB exports earnings. Besides, SHEFEXIL, the Export Promotion Council, also undertakes various export promotion measures like organizing buyer seller meets in India and abroad, undertaking trade delegations, holding of seminars, workshops and exhibitions for boosting the export of medicinal plants and herbs from the country.

Production and price of cement

†1641. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the production of cement in the country has not increased despite of about 20 per cent increase in its prices in the last one year, if so, the reasons therefore;

(b) whether it is also a fact that about 50 per cent units are running losses despite increase in the profit as a result of price rise; and

(c) the production cost of domestic cement in comparison to the production cost of foreign cement and the reasons for the difference in cost?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) No, Sir. The production and dispatches of cement have been increasing every year. As per the Cement Manufacturers' Association, the total production of cement was 127.57 million tonnes, 141.81 million tonnes and 155.66 million tonnes in 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) the details of cost of production are not maintained as it varies from company to company.

Steps to increase regional trade

†1642. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to take any steps to increase regional trade;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the amount likely to be spent in this regard; and

(d) the number of custom-centres functioning at present on the border-roads of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) India has signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Sri Lanka, Singapore, Nepal & Bhutan. India has also signed South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. India has signed Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with Afghanistan, Chile and MERCOSUR, and is also signatory to the regional preferential trading agreements, namely, Asia Pacific Trade Agreements (Bangladesh, China, India, Republic of korea, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka as members) & Global System of Trade Preference open to all developing countries). India has an Early Harvest Scheme with Thailand where tariff concessions are exchanged on 82 products.

(d) A Total of 136 Land Customs Stations, 36 Customs airport and 95 customs Ports have been notified for import and export of goods.

Setting up of International Trade Centre in India

†1643. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to set up in International Trade Centre in India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.